

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 1, 2006**

**For More Information Contact**

**VDH 06-25**

Danielle K. Jones, Adolescent Sexual Health Programs Outreach Coordinator (804) 864-7701

Charles Ford, PIO, (804) 864-7668

**VIRGINIA'S TEEN PREGNANCY RATE DROPS 30 PERCENT**

*May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month*

(RICHMOND, VA.)—Pregnancy rates among 15- to 19-year-old females in Virginia dropped 30 percent between 1995 and 2004. According to the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) Center for Health Statistics, the rate for this group dropped from 75.2 per 1,000 females in 1995 to 52.3 per 1,000 in 2004.

"We have made tremendous progress in reducing teenage pregnancies in the Commonwealth," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "However, there is still room for progress and teenage pregnancy is still a cause for concern."

There was nearly a 50 percent decrease in the pregnancy rates among females aged 15 to 17 between 1995 and 2004. Health officials attribute at least some of the decreases to the training and public education efforts of the state's seven Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative projects, 18 Better Beginnings Coalitions and VDH's Abstinence Education Initiative.

Statewide pregnancy rates among 18- to 19-year old females dropped only 5 percent from 1995 to 2004. Nearly half of Virginia's counties and cities saw increases in their teenage pregnancy rates for 18- to 19-year olds during this time period.

"We don't have clear indications for the increase in this age group," said Gale Grant, director Adolescent Sexual Health Programs. "We encourage communities to take a closer look at the teenage pregnancy rates and related trends in their area."

As a part of VDH's efforts to increase awareness of teenage pregnancy, the agency has set a goal to reduce teenage pregnancy to 47.5 or fewer pregnancies per 1,000 females 15-19 by 2015. Though there has been a significant decrease in the state teenage pregnancy rate, many communities still struggle with teenage pregnancy rates higher than the state average. VDH is encouraging localities to set local goals for 2015 based on their teenage pregnancy rates.

"As we work toward our 2015 goal, we want to maintain the rate of decrease we see among 15- to 17-year-olds and overcome the challenge we face in the 18- to 19-year-old population," said Grant.

VDH, in cooperation with National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, encourages teens, parents, educators, community leaders and other concerned citizens to take part in the fifth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Quiz. On May 3, teens can visit [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org) to take a short, scenario-based quiz that asks what they would do in a number of hypothetical situations.

For more information about the quiz visit the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy at [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org). For a fact sheet about teen pregnancy, information about local teen pregnancy rates and information about Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, visit [www.vahealth.org/teenpregnancyprevention](http://www.vahealth.org/teenpregnancyprevention).